

# Friends Forward



Summer 2010

National Wildlife Refuge System  
[www.fws.gov/refuges](http://www.fws.gov/refuges)

From the Chief

## Don't Underestimate America's Concern



Greg Siekaniec

It was July 14 – Day 87 of the Deepwater Horizon spill – and the oil had stopped, awaiting the relief well to permanently plug the hole in the Earth. It was a relief for Louisiana

and other Gulf States. It was a relief for the nation. It was a relief for wildlife. But it was only a temporary relief.

The long-term work continues.

The Deepwater Horizon oil spill response is massive, covering about 460,000 square miles of ocean and 750 miles of shoreline, fought by more than 40,000 people from federal, state, local agencies, industry and even academia. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service alone deployed more than 525 people.

But the fight on behalf of wildlife is not over. What we don't know about the impacts of the oil spill is far more extensive than what we do know.

When will wildlife thrive again? What will be the long-term and short-term environmental impacts of a spill that pumped millions of gallons into the ocean? What will happen to the next generation of wildlife? Will some species' reproductive function be impaired?

This much we do know: hundreds of Service employees deployed to the

*Continued on page 2*

## Inventory and Monitoring: Keeping Track of What We Have



“Our inventory and monitoring (I&M) program will be gathering information across the Refuge System in a scientifically rigorous, standardized way – information that is credible, stored in places that makes it permanent and available for any end user, from refuge manager to graduate student,” explains Mark Chase, director of the new Natural Resource Program Center in Fort Collins, CO.

The Refuge System has always monitored wildlife, conducting annual counts and surveys, banding animals to track their movement, observing nesting and migration

patterns. “Now we are trying to formalize and do better what we have been doing,” says Chase. “We’ve had centers of excellence but we haven’t knitted it together in a national system so that information collected in Maine is comparable to that collected in California.”

The national focus on climate change is one critical element that drives this renewed emphasis for I&M. The Refuge System needs consistent, accurate baseline data on all its trust resources to be able to measure changes, determine which changes are caused by sea-level rise or global warming and decide

*Continued on page 6*

# Puddle Stompers

“There’s no bad weather, just the wrong clothing,” says Kim Strassburg, visitor services manager at Tualatin River National Wildlife Refuge, OR. So Strassburg created the Puddle Stompers, encouraging families to “bring your pre-kindergarten naturalists to the refuge to stomp in puddles and appreciate the wet weather that makes western Oregon so green!”

Each session has a theme – slugs and bugs, frogs, ducks. There is craft time,

followed by trail walks when children observe frogs and tadpoles, hunt for bugs in fallen logs or pretend to be mice sneaking away from a sly coyote.


The Friends of Tualatin River provides volunteers; the refuge spent \$1,000 to buy 20 sets of kid-sized raincoats and rubber boots. The rain gear is shared with each new group.

“It’s important to reach the parents,” says Strassburg, adding that the current generation of young

parents may be the first to grow up less comfortable outdoors. “Parents need to see their kids showing excitement outdoors.”

## Tots on Trails

At St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge, FL, ranger Heather Bevis began offering ranger-led nature walks twice a month through Tots on Trails. Discovering that most of the toddlers had older siblings, she added a hands-on component. The older children, for example, had to find a leaf on the ground for a leaf-rubbing activity at the end of the walk.

Bevis also offers a Families in Nature program with a monthly theme, such as birds, manatees or whooping cranes. Friends of St. Marks provides snacks and some funding for materials. Bevis organizes a scavenger hunt along different trails. “I think once people get there and see how beautiful it is, and they are not intimidated by it, they’ll want to come back on a regular basis.” She also thinks the smallest visitors sleep better when they’ve spent time outdoors. 



Audra Cijpatrek/USFWS

*Tualatin River National Wildlife Refuge, OR, created Puddle Stompers for pre-kindergarten visitors.*


## Chief—Continued from page 1

Gulf worked long hours – through weekends and holidays – to ensure the best possible environmental outcome. And we know that Refuge Friends found innovative ways to create a silver lining in this nightmare.

The Friends of Balcones Canyonlands in Texas offered a \$10 donation to the National Wildlife Refuge Association’s oil spill fund for every new member. The Refuge Association’s oil spill fund

is helping Friends groups that incurred extra expenses as staff deployed to the spill. The Association’s first grant went to the Friends of Bon Secour National Wildlife Refuge in Alabama to help them plant native vegetation on newly constructed berms that prevented oil from reaching critical habitat for the endangered Alabama beach mouse.

Our future challenges will be as great as those we’ve already faced during the

87 days of spewing oil. All of us face one, overarching challenge: to maintain the nation’s sky-high interest in wildlife’s health. Perhaps one of the most important lessons we’ve learned is not to underestimate America’s concern for its natural resources. Thank you for all you do for national wildlife refuges. 



# Making Friends with Birders

There are nearly 50 million people in the United States with an avid or a casual interest in birding. How many of them are Friends? Even more important, how many might become Friends with an invitation or a little encouragement?

The National Audubon Society – the conservation organization historically devoted to the study of bird life – has been intimately connected to the Friends movement since its inception. In 1983, the Society developed an Adopt-a-Refuge program and within a year, 51 refuges had been adopted. Even today, some Friends groups are local Audubon chapters.

As Friends organizations seek to build membership, birders continue to be a natural fit. Birders typically seek a location that offers a combination of good birds and habitat, quality viewing opportunities and a welcoming atmosphere. The key is to bring birders to refuges and then create opportunities to show them how a Friends membership helps sustain habitat for the birds they love to see.

## Reaching Birders on the Web

Refuge System Birding Circle member and nature photographer Jim Williams subscribes to several e-mail networks where he uses every opportunity to tout refuges. “Members of refuge Friends groups could use the networks to post notes about events. Physical improvements on the refuges would be good copy and birders certainly would appreciate knowing about recent sightings or accumulations of birds during migration - 500,000 ring-necked ducks each fall at Rice Lake National Wildlife Refuge, MN, for example.”

Addresses for all of these e-mail networks can be found at [www.aba.org/resources/maillinglists.html](http://www.aba.org/resources/maillinglists.html). Other online birding networks are available at: [www.birdpost.com/](http://www.birdpost.com/) [www.birdingonthe.net/birdmail.html](http://www.birdingonthe.net/birdmail.html) <http://ebird.org/>

“These networks don’t reach casual birders,” says Williams, “but boosting attendance at the refuges among a


leadership group should filter down the skills ladder.”

It is also possible to post photos or videos on social media sites like Flickr, Facebook or YouTube. Birders searching for birding events or a particular species may find your refuge and eventually become a visitor and potential Friend.

## Reaching Birders in Person

The “Ding” Darling Wildlife Society, FL, posts all recent sightings of birds in a plexiglass case at the J.N. “Ding” Darling National Wildlife Refuge education center. Each sighting is represented by a laminated tile with a color picture. Friends membership brochures are available near the case and also near the center’s eBird tracker. Birds are also featured in a photo gallery on the Society’s Web site ([www.dingdarlingsociety.org](http://www.dingdarlingsociety.org)).

The Friends of Tualatin River National Wildlife Refuge, OR, is using a \$60,000 grant from the Washington County Visitors Association to expand its one-day annual Songbird Festival into a three-day event with activities organized by local organizations. A national advertising campaign is planned for the event.

“Birders are willing to spend money to travel,” says Friends board member Norman Penner. “Our birding resources haven’t been as well publicized in the past. With the new festival, visitors will be able to go birding at several sites, canoe on the river, hike in several forested areas and participate in organized nature photography events.” And throughout the festival, the Friends membership committee will be wearing vests asking, “Are you a member? Ask me!” 



Theresa Baldwin

Theresa Baldwin, member of the “Ding” Darling Wildlife Society, posted her photo of a great blue heron in the Society’s online photo gallery – one way to attract birders to a refuge before encouraging them to join the Friends.



# from friend to friend

share your  
success  
stories

## UPPER MISSISSIPPI 10 - 10 - 10 for 10

By Cindy Samples

The Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife Refuge is gearing up for a massive celebration of the refuge's recent designation as a Ramsar Wetland of International Importance. All Friends groups are invited to join by hosting their own 10-10-10 for 10! Celebrating Working Wetlands.

Here's how:

- Events must be held October 10 and last for at least 10 minutes.
- Format the name of your event: 10-10-10 for 10! Celebrating Working Wetlands – (add wetland name and location). For example: 10-10-10 for 10! Celebrating Working Wetlands – Friends of Trempealeau National Wildlife Refuge.
- At least 10 people must attend.
- The event must be held in or by a wetland, swamp, lake, pond, beach – and even caves with emerging springs.
- Do 10 things at your event, including having people list 10 reasons they love your refuge.
- Take a photo with at least 10 attendees visible and a legible sign showing the location name. Send photos to [Uppermississippiriver@fws.gov](mailto:Uppermississippiriver@fws.gov) by October 12 to be included in the celebratory video for the official ceremony to be held

on October 14. Please format your photo name as noted above.

Friends of the Refuge Headwaters are using their Facebook page to promote the event. Mississippi Wild is planning a ceremony at the Brownsville Overlook, where thousands of swans and waterfowl congregate during the fall migration. Friends of Pool 10 and Friends of Pool 9 are both hosting celebrations along the river.

Questions? Contact Cindy\_Samples@fws.gov, visitor services manager at Upper Mississippi National Wildlife and Fish Refuge, MN.



Upper Mississippi National Wildlife and Fish Refuge is making plans to celebrate its recent designation as a Ramsar Wetland of International Importance.

## NEW YORK Osprey Mosaic

By Claire Goad

If a picture is worth 10,000 words, how many words are needed for the 5,000-image floor-to-ceiling photo mosaic of an osprey that will grace the new visitor center and administrative complex at Wertheim National Wildlife Refuge?

The LEED\*-certified building, funded by the American Reinvestment and Recovery Act, is expected to open in fall 2011. Citizens throughout New York are invited to submit pictures of themselves enjoying nature.

Here's how to participate:

- Take pictures of friends, family and yourself outdoors.
- Go to [www.flickr.com/groups/wertheimvisitorphotos](http://www.flickr.com/groups/wertheimvisitorphotos). Read the group rules and join the group to upload photos.
- Go to [www.fws.gov/northeast/longislandrefuges/](http://www.fws.gov/northeast/longislandrefuges/) and download the copyright permission form. Send the form with a CD of your pictures to Christopher Deets, Wertheim National Wildlife Refuge, PO Box 21, Shirley, NY 11967.

The finished photo mosaic will be displayed as visitors enter the exhibit hall.

Claire Goad is president of the Friends of Wertheim National Wildlife Refuge.

\*LEED = Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design, a rating system developed by the U.S. Green Building Council



## SOUTH DAKOTA Honoring their Love of Nature

By Bridgette Flanders-Wanner

Two young men who died this year while working on the Huron Wetland Management District in South Dakota have been remembered with a nature trail dedicated on June 5, National Trails Day. The Friends of Maga Ta-Hohpi Waterfowl Production Area dedicated the trail in memory of Kelson Vaillancourt and James Abram Schneck, summer biotechs who died in a car accident en route to conduct waterfowl surveys. They are honored with plaques at the entrance to the Vaillancourt-Schneck Memorial Nature Trail.

The trail will be open year-round, providing access to 1,455 acres of native prairie and wetland habitats. The Friends and the Huron Regional Medical Center hosted a walk along the trail right after the dedication.

The Friends of Maga Ta-Hohpi are working to develop walking trails, interpretive signs, observation decks, science labs, educational programming, displays and much more. With a National Fish and Wildlife Foundation grant in 2006, the Friends built a permanent shelter along the trail so events like the Huron Prairie Fest could be held rain or shine. A 2010 grant enabled the Friends to update interpretive panels along the trail. On the agenda this fall is planting native grasses and forbs along the nature trail.

*Bridgette Flanders-Wanner is a wildlife biologist at the Huron Wetland Management District, SD.*

## MAINE Look What We Did!

A small Friends group became a vehicle for a very big purchase by



*The Friends of Maine Seabird Islands helped Maine Coastal Islands National Wildlife Refuge purchase this former bank building as a new visitor center/headquarters.*

the Maine Coastal Islands National Wildlife Refuge in April. The Friends of Maine Seabird Islands stepped into the fray of commercial real estate to help the refuge buy a building in Rockland that will become the refuge headquarters and visitor center.

Since the refuge's Comprehensive Conservation Plan was completed in 2005, the refuge has been seeking space for a visitor center in the mid-coast Maine area. The Friends helped identify a building in Rockland that had been used as a day care center for a large MBNA bank facility. Although MBNA had spent \$6 million to purchase and renovate the property in 2000, the sale price had dropped to \$695,000.

The Friends raised \$40,000 to cover the appraisal, a contaminants survey and other requirements – including a surprise tax payment a week before closing. The Maine Coast Heritage Trust provided a loan to the Friends

for a large security deposit until the building could be transferred to the Refuge System.

Friends chairman Jane Hopwood admitted being scared at first by the immensity of the project, but refuge manager Beth Goettel says the “Friends were willing to make a leap of faith, and the project built a lot of trust between staff and Friends.” Hopwood’s key piece of advice to small groups taking on big projects is to “trust your managers, communicate and go for it.”

Staff and Friends expect to move into their new home in September. The Friends plan to have a gift shop, and Hopwood dreams of “something that is visual and ‘touchable’ for visitors to experience a nesting seabird island.” 

## Inventory and Monitoring: Keeping Track of What We Have—Continued from page 1

how to mitigate or adapt to protect species and habitat.

Every region will have an I&M coordinator, a data manager and four other staff, primarily biologists. The Refuge System leadership team will set priorities for the specific information to be collected. The data could be used to create models about relationships between species and habitat. Such data can then be used to facilitate decisions about how to manage or even acquire land. “If, for example, you are interested in ducks,” says Chase, “it will be helpful to know that a particular 200 acres of land is better than a different 200 acres, based on predictive models.”


### What about Friends?

“I think absolutely there is room for citizen science in the I&M program,” says Chase. “The message for

Friends is that biological monitoring is fun!” He anticipates great and diverse additional opportunities for Friends and volunteers to engage in I&M activities as the program is formalized.

There will be varying levels of complexity in each inventory project. At the highest level, data collection will be very rigorous and detailed. At the other end might be a BioBlitz – a useful but less complex refuge survey with great involvement by Friends, volunteers and the general public.

Refuge managers and regional offices will determine the appropriate inventory level for each refuge and species. Friends and other volunteers already help with annual counts of bats at Supawna Meadows National Wildlife Refuge, NJ, Laysan albatross at Midway Atoll National

Wildlife Refuge and sea turtle nests on several coastal refuges. Chase expects Friends to be regularly involved in counts where simple training produces significant results. “You can learn a lot about the prairie chicken population just by spending a morning counting male prairie chickens on their booming grounds,” says Chase. 

*Front page photos: Dragonfly (Rick Hartmann), Prairie chicken (George Levandoski), BioBlitz at Deer Flat National Wildlife Refuge, ID (USFWS), Bison (Richard C. Hager/USFWS)*

## Q&A *send us your questions*

### Q: How do Friends groups handle vending machines and drink/snack sales?

**A:** Kevin Kilcullen, chief of the Refuge System Branch of Visitor Services, notes that visitor center stores are not intended “to be all-purpose grocery stores, but we want to accommodate the visitor.”

With that in mind, it is important to follow pertinent state rules regarding any restrictions on sales by nonprofit organizations or on government property. It is also important that sales at a visitor center store not compete

with concessionaires or other local businesses. The Randolph-Sheppard Act gives state licensing agencies for the blind the right of first refusal to operate vending machines on federal property.

There are some philosophical issues as well. The **Friends of the Prairie Learning Center** at the Neal Smith National Wildlife Refuge, IA, is moving away from all plastic containers and plans to sell metal



*Friends of the Prairie Learning Center, IA, decided to sell only metal drinking bottles, refillable at specially adapted water fountains at the center.*



# Honors for Refuge Employees and Friends

**Andrea VanBeusichem**, visitor services manager at Montezuma National Wildlife Refuge, NY, received the American Recreation Coalition's Beacon Award for creative use of technology. VanBeusichem developed a self-guided cell phone tour at Montezuma Refuge in the Finger Lakes region of New York.

**Nancy Haugen**, park ranger at Sherburne National Wildlife Refuge, MN, until her retirement in May, received the Coalition's 2010 Legends Award. Haugen coordinated the work of more than 840 volunteers while developing a strong partnership with the Retired Senior Volunteer Program and guiding the development of the refuge's very active Friends group.

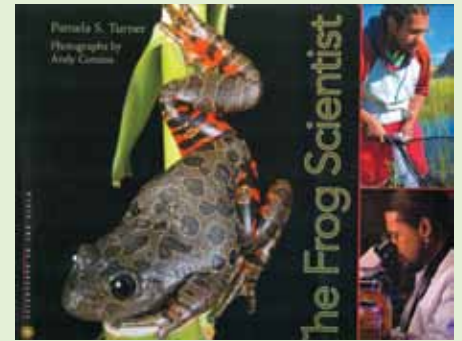
**Jean Takekawa**, refuge manager at Nisqually National Wildlife Refuge, WA, received the 2010 Warren G. Magnuson Puget Sound Legacy Award for her tireless efforts to restore more than 760 acres of the refuge to tidal wetlands.

The Outstanding Oregon Tourism Volunteer Award was presented to **Jan Cupernall**, treasurer and past president of the Friends of Malheur National Wildlife Refuge, OR, particularly for her work on the annual migratory bird festival.

**Friends of Noxubee National Wildlife Refuge**, MS, was named Conservation Educator of the Year by the Mississippi Wildlife Federation. A founding member of the Noxubee Friends – **Margaret Copeland** – received the 2010

National Audubon Society Callison Award, honoring environmental policy achievements, creativity, coalition building, education and outreach. 🦋

## The Book Shelf



### The Frog Scientist

by Pamela Turner; photos by Andy Comins (Houghton Mifflin, 2009, Ages 8 and up)

When Tyrone Hayes was a boy in South Carolina, he caught frogs in a swamp near his home. He is still catching frogs as a researcher and professor at the University of California, Berkeley. Hayes is mentoring another generation of scientists and working crazy hours to answer compelling questions about frogs.

*The Frog Scientist* was honored for Excellence in Science Books by the American Association for the Advancement of Science. Houghton Mifflin's Scientists in the Field series offers an exciting, dramatically photographed introduction to careers in science – including many in the field of wildlife and habitat conservation. 🦋

## Q&A—Continued from page 6

drinking bottles. Water fountains are being adapted to allow for refilling these bottles.

**The Cabeza Prieta Natural History Association**, AZ, which sells bottled water in its nature store, says every sales item must meet one of two criteria – it must be educational or carry a conservation message; or it must be necessary for the visitor's health and safety. Several groups mentioned selling either locally produced honey or candy like Environmental Chocolates where a portion of the proceeds supports wildlife.

**Friends of Loxahatchee National Wildlife Refuge**, FL, doesn't want to encourage eating at the refuge at all, so only bottled water is sold from a small refrigerator. **Friends of the Wichitas**, OK, operates an actual

vending machine. Friends' member Katherine Hunt said the worst problem is that longhorns and bison liked to rub on it and raccoons are attracted to the moths at night. The vendor minimized the moth problem by installing a darker exterior panel.

Vending machines or refrigerators can consume significant electricity – one reason the Friends of the Prairie Learning Center abandoned them altogether. Martin Brockman, chief of the Branch of Equipment and Facility Management, recommends installing a VendingMiser ([www.usatech.com/energy\\_management/energy\\_vm.php](http://www.usatech.com/energy_management/energy_vm.php)), which is already in use at the National Conservation Training Center. 🦋

## For the Latest Oil Spill Information:


For complete information on the BP Oil Spill Response, go to [www.fws.gov/home/dhoilspill/index.html](http://www.fws.gov/home/dhoilspill/index.html)

For the latest information on the number of birds, sea turtles and mammals that have been rescued, recovered or released along the Gulf Coast in Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama and Florida since the spill began on April 20, go to [www.deepwaterhorizonresponse.com/go/site/2931](http://www.deepwaterhorizonresponse.com/go/site/2931), pull down the Current Ops tab, click on Fish and Wildlife Report. The chart contains a detailed breakdown by state, type of animal and level of oiling.

For a detailed U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service map of the Unified Command wildlife rescue and recovery operation and the shoreline cleanup assessment team (SCAT) operation in Louisiana, go

to [www.fws.gov/home/dhoilspill/maps.html](http://www.fws.gov/home/dhoilspill/maps.html).

For Service fact sheets regarding many aspects of the spill, including the Natural Resource Damage

Assessment and Restoration Program, and links to national wildlife refuges potentially in harm's way, go to [www.fws.gov/home/dhoilspill/factsheets.html](http://www.fws.gov/home/dhoilspill/factsheets.html). 



*These brown pelicans in Fort Jackson, LA, have been cleaned and await release back to the wild.*

## Calendar

### September 1

**National Fish and Wildlife Foundation Grant Application Deadline** – 2010 Special Emphasis on Birding Projects

[www.nfwf.org/](http://www.nfwf.org/) Search for “Friends Group Grant Program”

### October 10 – 16

#### National Wildlife Refuge Week

*Note: In August, each refuge will receive a Refuge Week Toolkit including a sample press release, letter to the editor/ op-ed column, environmental education lesson plans, nature-themed children's booklists, media tips (traditional and electronic media) and feature articles to place in local newspapers or magazines.*

### December

#### 50th Anniversary Arctic National Wildlife Refuge

Event information at <http://arctic.fws.gov/50th.htm>.

Also follow the Friends of Alaska National Wildlife Refuges Facebook page – “Arctic National Wildlife Refuge 50th Anniversary Celebration”

## FriendsForward

**Address editorial inquiries about this issue to:**

Karen Leggett  
[www.fws.gov/refuges](http://www.fws.gov/refuges)  
USFWS-NWRS  
4401 N. Fairfax Drive, Room 632  
Arlington, VA 22203  
703-358-2375  
[Karen\\_Leggett@fws.gov](mailto:Karen_Leggett@fws.gov)

*This newsletter is printed on recycled paper using soy-based inks.*



Follow the National Wildlife Refuge System on Twitter @ USFWSRefuges.

